

The Passion and Death of Our Lord



by Father Francis Xavier Lasance

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Remember the Passion and Death of our Blessed Saviour; remember that He suffered for love of us; in union with Him, let us carry our daily cross patiently; let us suffer lovingly in atonement for our sins, for our personal sanctification, for the wants of Holy Church, for the conversion of sinners, for the propagation of the faith, and for the release of the suffering souls in purgatory.

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Eternal Father! I offer Thee the precious blood of Jesus Christ in satisfaction for my sins, and for the wants of Holy Church.

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Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you; but if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. - *1 Peter 4:12-13*

The Way of the Cross

The Way of the Cross is a striking image of our life. We are all journeying toward a more or less distant Calvary; at the first Station of this journey we are all condemned to death; at the last we are laid in the sepulcher. Between these two, what trials, what sufferings, what struggles, and, alas, what falls! These are the intermediate Stations of our journey, and the sorrowful Stations of Our Lord teach how we should bear ourselves in ours, that is, how we should obey, rise again when we have fallen; endure, and be silent. His silence speaks to us, His sufferings teach us, His patience satisfies

for us. His charity wins us. A fervent Christian will find in each Station a lesson and encouragement for every situation of his soul. Happy souls, who love the Way of the Cross!

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Let us keep the crucifix habitually before our eyes, let us often and lovingly kiss it. While gazing upon the image of Jesus crucified, let us be mindful of the words of the Apostle: "He loved me and delivered Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20); let us give expression to our love for Our Saviour, by exclaiming with Saint Francis of Assisi: "My God and my all!"

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In what place soever Thou shalt be, my Lord, O King, either in death or in life, there will Thy servant be. - *II Kings 15:21*

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Via Crucis

The path of life is rough and stony. Sharp flints and hidden thorns are thickly strewn upon its surface, wounding our weary feet as we toil ever onward and upward toward our heavenly home. Does our courage fail, do our hearts grow faint? Do our aching eyes look sadly upon that broad and tempting way, so bright, so pleasant, so attractive to our senses - but which we know would lead us on to destruction? Then, turn to Christ as He hangs upon the cruel gibbet with outstretched arms and bleeding hands. *Passio Christi, conforta me.* Passion of Christ strengthen me, for the way is long and weary: comfort me as I fight my way along the path of life safely to the haven of Thy Sacred Heart; comfort me in that last dread hour of summons to Thy feet. - *William Doyle, S.J.*

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Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. -
Psalm 115:15

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Why Should I Suffer? What Have I Done?

There are many who say, "Why should I suffer? What have I done?" When I hear remarks of that kind I answer: "Are you a Christian man - a follower of Him Who said, 'Deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow Me'?" Then take up your cross bravely, patiently, and gladly.

Suffering is needed in this world in order that we may develop character. If borne in conformity to the will of God, it brings out all that is good in us, for until we meet with trouble and trial and temptation, sadness, sickness, and sorrow, we have not put forth our whole powers to account. God sends us suffering that its purging fires may purify and make beautiful the Christian soul, and no child of God has ever passed through the golden gate without having shed tears in this land of exile. But, remember, it will be when we reach that land where death and sorrow shall be no more, and not before, that God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. It is as though He would tell us in His own gentle, sweet, and suggestive way that till we reach that life of eternal happiness, tears must furrow our cheeks, and sorrow must be with us, and through a mist of tears, like the haze on the river, the cloud on the mountain, the dew on the heather, we must look up to our home in heaven.

Only be faithful to your mission in life, be up and doing, true to yourselves, loving to your God. Then you will look back upon the trials and troubles, the sickness and the sadness of your earthly pilgrimage, as leaders of armies look back upon

their struggles and wounds after the shouts of victory
proclaim the battle won. - *Bernard Vaughan, S.J.*

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Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for when he
hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which
God hath promised to them that love Him. - *James 1:12*

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The Love of Jesus Crucified

Good Catholics will not forget the love of Jesus crucified.
They will take care that the image of their crucified Saviour
is in a prominent place in their house; they will carry a
crucifix with them; they will frequently perform some
devotion in honor of the wounds of Jesus, such as saying five
times, Glory be to the Father, etc., in honor of the wounds in
the sacred hands and feet and side of our divine Lord; they
will sometimes make the Way of the Cross, remembering
that all that is necessary is to pass from station to station
and reflect a little on the passion; above all, they will not fail
on Fridays faithfully to observe and willingly to accept the
mortification of abstinence from flesh meat which the
Church imposes on her children as an act of gratitude to
Jesus Christ Who suffered and died for them on that day. - *C.
McNeiry, C.S.S.R.*

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With Christ I am nailed to the cross. - *Galatians 2:19*

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The hearts of the saints, like sea-shells, murmur of the
Passion evermore. - *Father Faber*

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Resolve to meditate daily on the Passion of Jesus Christ, and to practice the virtues He has taught us in His sufferings. Who is He that suffers? Viewing the Passion as a whole, ask yourself this question: *Who is He that suffers?*

1. The Lamb without spot, "who did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (I Peter 2:22), the Holy of Holies, whom His very executioners acknowledge to be holy and the Son of God.

2. That Jesus of Nazareth who "went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38). This is the return He meets with: "They repaid Me evil for good." (Psalm 34:12)

3. The Good Shepherd, the Good Samaritan, the Lover of men.

What did He suffer? Most cruel bodily torture. If your crucifix represented Christ as He really looked you would sicken at the sight; and yet this mangled body is but the title-page to the book of the passion; the anguish of His soul was something far more terrible.

- *from Meditations, by Father Barraud*

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I lay down My life for My sheep. - *John 10:15*

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At Whose Hands Did He Suffer?

At the hands of His own people. "Thy own nation," said Pilate, "and the chief priests have delivered Thee up to me. What hast Thou done?" (John 18:35). What, indeed? The land was ringing with the miracles of His mercy; yet the entire people rose against Him. "And they shall say to Him: What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands? And He shall say: With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me." (Zachariah 13:6)

For whose sins did He suffer?

For the sins of them who crucified Him, for my sins. "He loved me and delivered Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

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How Did He Suffer?

1. With unruffled patience, neither reproaching His persecutors nor defending Himself. "Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not; but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly." (1 Peter 2:23) "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and He shall not open His mouth." (Isaiah 53:71)

2. With divine love. "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep." (John 10:11) "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" (Luke xii, 50)

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The charity of Christ presses us: judging this, that if one died for all, then all were dead. And Christ died for all; that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again. - *II Corinthians 5:14-15*

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The Dream of the Holy Child

You may have seen a picture of the Babe of Bethlehem asleep in the manger, while above His head moves the sad procession in which He is carrying His cross to Calvary. The dream of the Holy Child reminds us of a deep and touching truth. From the first moment of His life all the anguish of His coming passion was present to our Saviour; waking or sleeping He never lost sight of it. He looked forward to it with dread indeed and yet with most earnest longing.

To me the cross is terrible - I can not help that; yet if I love Jesus Christ ever so little I shall try to bear it cheerfully for His dear sake.

"The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom, and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy?" - *Thomas a Kempis*

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Unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him. - *Philippians 1:29*

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Our Lord Foretold His Passion to His Disciples

Our Saviour foretold His passion several times; but just before His death, He did this with greater distinctness than ever (Mark 10).

"They were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them, and following they were afraid." The haste our Saviour made on this last journey to Jerusalem shows how eager He was to begin His passion. It filled His apostles with

fear because they knew His enemies were waiting for Him. And then He scares them still more by foretelling in detail the sufferings He is to undergo: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes and ancients, and they shall condemn Him to death and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles, and they shall mock Him and spit on Him and scourge Him and kill Him; and the third day He shall rise again."

Until the very last night before His Passion, there was nothing in Our Lord's manner to cause His disciples any serious alarm. The preaching and the miracles go on to the very end. There is no tremor in their Master's voice, no trouble in His eyes, no pallor on His cheek. He is just the same as ever with the people, just the same with them. He does nothing to avert the blow that hangs over Him. His hour has come and He is there to meet it, quiet, self-possessed, serenely calm.

Again, there is no fretfulness, such as we often show when we have anything to suffer, but on the contrary a most marvelous sweetness. He is severe, indeed, toward the pharisees, for they were hypocrites; but to the people how kind He is! We see Him gathering the little children about Him, embracing and blessing them, weeping over the Holy City, defending those who sang "Hosanna," commending the widow's mite, defending Magdalen; and to the traitor Judas how patient, how gentle He is! Not one thought for Himself; all His care is for us.

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You call Me Master and Lord. And you say well; for so I am. I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also. - *John 13:13,15*

Hosannas

Christ rode upon an ass from Bethania to Jerusalem, and the multitude that went before and that followed cried, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!"

And when He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it, saying: "If thou had known, and that is this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes."

Jesus knows that within a few short days the "*Hosannas*" of these children will be changed into the execrations of their fathers. That terrible cry even now sounds in His ears: "His blood be upon us and upon our children," these very children whose innocent lips are now chanting the hymn of praise. May God save me from the curse of a hardened heart and give me grace to know the day of my visitation.

What a lesson we have here of the falsehood and fickleness of this world and the folly of setting one's hopes on it! It is ready at any moment to turn round on us, to cast us off, to laugh at our affliction. So long as a man is rich and prosperous he is worshipped wherever he goes; every one stands cap in hand to receive him; but let him fall into poverty - then how soon his trencher friends will drop away! They have shared his sunshine gladly enough; but they hid from him in foul weather. Semei threw stones at David when he was fleeing from Absalom; when he returned in triumph he went to meet him and do him honor. The lesson is as old as the hills; yet every man and woman has to learn it by bitter experience. "O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?" (Isaiah 4:3)

Give me grace, O my God, to despise the world and to serve Thee alone.

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Lessons of Our Lord on the Eve of His Passion

Love of Himself is the first lesson. "As the Father hath loved Me I also have loved you. Abide in My love." "The Father Himself hath loved you because you have loved Me." Christ, therefore, is the bond of union between God and man; for God must love those who love His Son, and the more they love His beloved the greater His love for them.

"If you love Me keep My commandments." This shows how we are to prove our love for Christ and provides a sure test of the depth and sincerity of our love; for we can not bear to displease those who are really dear to us.

"If you keep My commandments you shall abide in My love, as I also have kept My Father's commandments and do abide in His love."

The second lesson is love of our neighbor. "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another." He calls it with good reason a new commandment; for it goes far beyond the prescription of the old law, "Thou shalt love thy friend as thyself." (Leviticus 19:18) Our Lord would have us love not our friends only, but our enemies, a lesson He has taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan and was to enforce again on the cross by His prayer for them that crucified Him.

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You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy.

But I say to you, Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you:

That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who makes his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and rains upon the just and the unjust.

For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this?

And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens this? - *Matthew 5:43-47*

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And if you love them that love you, what thanks are to you? for sinners also love those that love them.

And if you do good to them who do good to you, hoping for nothing thereby: and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the sons of the Highest: for he is kind to the unthankful, and to the evil. - *Luke 6:32,33,35*

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Remember Me!

Every tabernacle is surmounted by a cross, because the Blessed Sacrament is a memorial of Our Lord's Passion and death. "As often as ye shall eat this bread and drink this chalice, ye shall show forth the death of the Lord until He come."

Why? Because it was given as a parting gift on the eve of the Passion, and because it contains our Lord and perpetuates Him as the Victim of the Cross.

In the first place it was given as a parting gift. Let us recall the touching episode of the Last Supper. Jesus and His apostles are seated at the table for the celebration of the Paschal solemnity. It is the last meal they are to take together, for He is about to leave them. They have lived in His company for almost three years. He has been the kindest of masters and truest of friends, and now He is to part from them. Their hearts are filled with sorrow. Our Lord is sorrowful too. He knows how they will miss Him. He knows their weakness. "You shall all be scandalized in Me," He says to them. Every farewell makes a pathetic scene. He is going to meet death; tomorrow evening at the same hour He will be in His grave, and they will have shamefully forsaken Him; their head and chief will have even thrice denied Him. Jesus foresees all this, yet He will not cast them off. "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end." Even in those last hours of His life, when His soul is sorrowful unto death, He will give them a token of His undying love. He will compel them to remember Him. A death-bed gift is always a precious gift, more especially if it be a souvenir to which the heart of the dying one clings and around which entwine all the tenderest memories of the dear departed one.

And so the Divine Master says to His disciples: "I am with you all days even to the consummation of ages." His presence amongst us is the gift He is about to confer upon His children. He is to die, and yet to remain living amid these scenes until the end of time.

Hearken to His words: "I am the living Bread that came down from heaven. . . . Whosoever eats Me the same shall live by Me. . . . Take ye and eat, this is My Body. Drink ye all of this, for this is My Blood." And then He adds: "Do this; do as you have seen Me do. You also take bread and wine and consecrate them into My Flesh and My Blood, and do this in memory of Me."

Dear Lord, blessed be Thy Holy Name! This very morning we have gathered at Thy Banquet. Thou hast fed us as Thou didst feed Thy apostles and disciples, and Thou art still as truly, really, and substantially present here, as Thou wert that blessed night with Thy chosen ones in Jerusalem's "upper room."

The Blessed Eucharist is a Memorial because it is the parting gift of our Lord to the apostles and to us. But it is also a Memorial because it contains our Lord as the Victim of the Cross; it perpetuates Him, as it were, in that state.

When we look at this Blessed Sacrament, let us recall that pathetic word of our Lord, "Remember Me!" Let us reflect that it is a Memorial of the greatest sorrow men ever witnessed, a Memorial of the greatest pain a creature on earth ever endured, a Memorial of the tenderest, most faithful, most unselfish, most heroic love the world shall ever know - the last gift of a Heart that fears to be forgotten. Lord, we will remember Thee! "May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, and my hand wither and rot away, if I should ever forget Thee!"

- Brinkmeyer: Short Conferences on the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Adapted)

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Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children;

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness. - *Ephesians 5:1,2*

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The Garden of Gethsemani

When they had sung a hymn, they went forth to the Mount of Olives. (Mark 14:26)

Then Jesus came with them into a country place which is called Gethsemani. And He said to His disciples: Sit you here till I go yonder and pray. - *Matthew 26:36*

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About a stone's throw from the Garden of Gethsemani was a grotto hewn out of the solid rock. The light was admitted into this grotto through a hole in the roof. In this country a custom prevailed of building cisterns for the purpose of holding rain-water. This fact, together with the form of the grotto and the aperture in the top, leads to the inference that it was formerly used as a cistern from which the garden was watered. At the time of our Lord it was old and abandoned, and no longer capable of retaining water, but it afforded the loiterer in the garden a place of refuge in warm or rainy weather. This grotto, now converted into a little chapel, still exists. It is called the Grotto of Agony, on account of the agony and bloody sweat which our Divine Saviour suffered there.

Having manifested to His three disciples the profound sadness under which He was laboring, Jesus said to them, "Sit ye here, till I go yonder and pray." The solitude of the place, the darkness of the night, the profound silence of nature, and the imminence of the hour of His capture - these were circumstances which combined to cause the Saviour to raise His voice in prayer to His Heavenly Father.

"Taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad."

"Then He said to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Stay you here and watch with Me."

"And going a little further, He fell upon His face, praying and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt." - *Matthew 26:37-39*

He Began to Grow Sorrowful

He *began*. This is what Saint Augustine would call "a watchful word"; for there is a deep significance in it. Our Saviour has always had every detail of His passion before His mind; yet it is only now that He begins to show His sorrow. As for me, no sooner have I anything to suffer than I either grow fretful, or make a martyr of myself.

Let me learn to bear my sorrows in silence. "*Then He said to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death.*" It would seem to have been God's purpose that His Son should die of a broken heart; but the malice of men has other tortures in store for Him: so He who gave men free will weaves their cruelty into His original design and suffers them to put their Saviour to death.

"Stay you here and watch with Me." Saying these words, He staggers forward under the great load of heart-rending sorrow, till He disappears from their sight in the little Grotto where He was wont to pray.

Fear, Sorrow, and Weariness

The evangelists use three terms to describe what took place in our Saviour's soul: fear, sorrow, and weariness.

His fear arose from the anticipation of the awful tortures which were to come upon Him. He shrank from pain as we do, and was stricken with terror at the thought of the scourging and the nailing on the cross. "Father," He sobbed, "if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me."

His sorrow was for the sins of men, my own sins among them, all of which were present to Him, all of which were laid upon Him as His own. And sin was not to Him what it is to us. Being God as well as man, He could measure its guilt, its degradation, its monstrous ingratitude, its fearful consequences; and it filled His soul with unutterable loathing, with heart-breaking grief.

His weariness was the result of unrequited love, the cruel sense of failure, the heartless waste of His blood, whereof so many for whom it was shed would make no use at all, would even turn it to their own damnation.

So intense was His anguish that first a cold sweat broke out all over His body standing in big drops upon His brow; then this sweat became tinged with blood, till at last it was pure blood that oozed from every pore, filling His garments and dropping from His face on to the ground.

Our Saviour's Prayer

"Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me." What an agony of woe breathes through this heart-broken petition! What fear, what sadness, what weariness! It teaches us that we, too, may pray for relief in sorrow; yet we must learn to add, as Jesus did: "Nevertheless not My will but Thine be done." His heart is perfectly submissive to the decree of His Father. While as man He recoils from the appalling sacrifice demanded of Him, His Father's will is His will; nor does He for one moment set Himself in opposition to it.

The Angel of Comfort

"And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him." This angel was sent to whisper to our Saviour's bleeding heart what that dark cloud of anguish

had for the time obscured, the glory His Passion would give to God, the salvation of countless souls made in God's likeness, the repentance of sinners, the triumphs of His Church, the love of His saints, the generosity of His martyrs, the immaculate holiness of His Virgin Mother, all which were to be the fruit of the sufferings He was now to undergo. Stern comfort in truth; we in our weakness may think it cold comfort; yet Jesus was grateful to that blessed spirit and gathered new strength from His inspirations; nevertheless to the end of His prayer He went on repeating the same words. "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done." (Matthew 26:42)

Angels cannot suffer and therefore, though full of pity, can not share in our sufferings; but Jesus is a real man and, like every son of Adam, feels the need of human sympathy; so, while the angel returns to heaven, He goes to look for His three chosen friends. He had told them to watch.

He now finds them sleeping. They have no sympathy to give Him; yet how gently He reproaches them! "Simon, sleepest thou? Could not thou watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing; but the flesh is weak."

Our Saviour then returned to His solitary prayer, and when after a while He came back to them, "He found them again asleep, for their eyes were heavy; and they knew not what to answer Him. Am I not in just the same case? I have slept when I ought to have been watching; I have left my dear Lord to suffer alone, and I know not what to answer Him. All my grand protestations of love and loyalty have proved empty and worthless. I am, indeed, an unprofitable servant.

Christ has now entered into His eternal kingdom; yet He is still as human as ever. Has He not in these latter days come

back to earth at Paray to complain that men love Him so little, to beg for their love? In the Holy Eucharist He is still longing for our sympathy.

It Might Have Been

"And He cometh the third time," His prayer being now finished, "and said to them: Sleep on now and take your rest. Behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners." There is a gentle irony in these sad words which must have touched them to the quick. It is too late now; they have missed their opportunity; the hour is come and they are not ready for it.

What bitterness there is for all of us in the thought of what might have been! If I had been more faithful, if I had but watched and prayed, how far otherwise I should have borne myself under temptation! how much remorse I should have been spared! how much suffering I should have spared my Saviour!

Neither Peter, James, nor John had obeyed Our Lord's injunction; yet Peter fell terribly, James, like the rest, ran away. John was faithful to the end. How inscrutable are the ways of grace!

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Today, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts. -
Psalm 94:8

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The Lesson which we should learn from Christ's example in His agony is this - the necessity of prayer. But it is not sufficient to pray only in time of adversity; we should pray always, and pray with entire submission to the divine will.

Let us expose to our dear Saviour all our wants and miseries; let us ask not only for salvation, but also for all the temporal blessings of which we may stand in need; let us ask Him for health and for preservation from all the accidents and dangers that surround our daily life. But let us ever make these requests in the spirit of the prayer of Jesus Christ, saying with Him, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

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This is the confidence which we have towards Him: That whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He hears us. - / *John 5:14*

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The Traitor

Judas having received a band of soldiers and servants from the chief Priests and the Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth and said to them: Whom seek ye?" - *John 18:3-4*

With what serene majesty Our Saviour faces His foes! How calm and self-possessed! Like a brave captain in a storm at sea - nay, rather, like Himself as He stood up and quelled the winds and waves of Genesareth. "Whom seek ye?" "Jesus of Nazareth," say they. "I am He." No wonder "they went backward and fell to the ground;" for they seemed to hear the name of their God as Moses had received it ages ago: "*I am Who am.*"

Our Lord had now declared Himself; so there was no further need for Judas to point Him out; but the poor wretch was afraid of losing his blood-money if he failed to fulfill his contract. It is hardly conceivable that he believed Jesus to be

"the Son of the living God," as his fellow-apostles had done since Peter's confession. Perhaps his want of faith was one reason of his terrible abandonment; or he may have once had the faith and let it die out in his heart. That of course would explain everything.

So Judas now comes forward to fulfill his accursed bargain. "Friend," asks our Saviour, "whereto art thou come?" Was this said in irony? Oh, no! There was an awful irony, a most bitter jest in that "Hail, Rabbi!" of the traitor. He hails Christ as his Lord and Master at the very moment when he is giving himself for ever, body and soul, to Satan; but the good Jesus meant what He said. He called him friend because He longed to make him so. His heart was yearning for that perishing soul. Good Shepherd as He was, He was on the point of laying down His life for that lost sheep of His flock; but all is in vain. The cruel sign is given, and then, with a look of unutterable sadness Jesus says: "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?" They were His last words to that false friend.

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Among our Saviour's captors were "the chief priests and magistrates of the Temple and the ancients." These same men were present afterward at His crucifixion; yet, as they were His judges, their presence was not only unnecessary, but utterly unbecoming their position. Two things we gather from it:

1. Their intense malice against Our Lord.
2. That even before His trial they were resolved to convict Him.

This now brings upon them a severe reproof; for our Saviour throughout His passion, while saying nothing in His own

defence, always speaks out fearlessly in the cause of justice. "Are you come out," He says, "as it were against a thief, with swords and clubs? When I was daily with you in the Temple you did not stretch forth your hands against Me; but this is your hour and the power of darkness." You are doing this, He adds, "that the Scriptures may be fulfilled."

Had not these wretched men quite silenced the voice of conscience this should have been enough to frighten them. They knew well what the prophets had said of the Messiah, and what they were doing now and had it in their hearts to do was a literal fulfillment of those predictions. Yet when they had nailed Him on the cross they actually dared to quote against Him a psalm which they well knew to be Messianic: "He trusted God. Let Him now deliver Him, if He will have Him; for He said, I am the Son of God." (Psalm 21:9) O God! What a fearful thing it is to resist Thy grace! All this time they were strictly observing the law, fasting twice in the week, giving tithes of all that they possessed. What fearful self-deception!

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Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but within, you are full of rapine and uncleanness.

Thou blind Pharisee, first make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside may become clean.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within, are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness.

So you also outwardly indeed appear to men just; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. - *Matthew*

23:25-28

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Peter's Fall

The soldiers took Jesus and bound Him.

"And they led him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law to Caiphas, who was the high priest of that year.

"Now Caiphas was he who had given the counsel to the Jews: That it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

"And Simon Peter followed Jesus." - *John 18:13-15*

Peter had followed our Lord "*afar off*." When he arrived at the court of the high priest he was refused admission; but John, recognizing his voice, spoke to the portress and brought in Peter. "The maid said to Peter: Art thou not also one of this man's disciples? He said: "I am not."

This first denial was perhaps hardly deliberate. The question was unexpected and the reply sprung to his lips from a sudden instinct of self-preservation; but having made this first false step, he began to act a part, warming himself at the fire and joining in the talk around it, as though he were an indifferent spectator. He was now wholly under the influence of fear; for his one great object henceforth was to escape further notice.

O my God, give me grace to be on my guard against a first false move which may involve such fearful consequences; for if I do not take the first step I shall not take the second.

I Know Not This Man

Directly after this first denial the cock crew; but Peter did not notice it. Presently "another maid saw him, and she saith to them that were there: This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied, with an oath: I know not the man. And after a little while they that stood by came and said to Peter: Surely thou also art one of them; for even thy speech doth discover thee" - the Galileans apparently having a dialect of their own. "Then Peter began to curse and swear that he knew not the man; and immediately the cock crew again." That cock might have crowed himself hoarse before Peter heard him. Fear had now taken such complete possession of him that he was deaf to every warning.

How often has it been so with me! When under the dominion of some strong passion I reject all good advice and every holy inspiration. What would affect me deeply at another time has no power then. I am dragged along like a prisoner in chains.

Peter's Repentance

"And the Lord, turning, looked on Peter." It was a look full of sorrow and tender reproach. Not only Peter's cowardly denial, but countless others of which it was the type and sample were lying heavy on that loving heart. That look went straight to Peter's heart, recalling to his memory everything he had forgotten; his protestations of love and loyalty, the Lord's solemn but fruitless warnings, his neglect of prayer in the garden, all came back to him then, "and going forth he wept bitterly," or, as Saint Mark puts it so tenderly: "he began to weep." Yes, Peter began to weep, and till his dying day, we are told, he could never hear the cock crow but his grief broke forth anew, till that worn face of his was furrowed with the tears that were always falling.

If I have sinned like Peter, God grant me grace to repent like Peter.

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A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. - *Psalms 50:19*

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Thou hast mercy upon all, because Thou canst do all things, and overlooks the sins of men for the sake of repentance. - *Wisdom 11:24*

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Jesus Before Caiphas the High Priest

The chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put Him to death. (Matthew 26)

They themselves were His judges; but, being already resolved on His death, they stooped to the basest means to accomplish their purpose. Mark how jealousy and hatred degrade the character and darken the conscience.

"Their evidence did not agree." Alas! there is no need to bring forsworn witnesses against me. How many there are who can bear true evidence, my own conscience confirming all they say! I will plead guilty, therefore, and throw myself on God's great mercy, that I may not be convicted and condemned at the last day.

"And the high priests, rising up, said to Him: Answer Thou nothing to the things which these witness against Thee? But Jesus held His peace." Another lesson for me. Have I ever

held my peace under a false accusation? Why, it is as much as I can do to be silent under a true one. "And the high priest said to Him: I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Then out of reverence for the office Caiphas held and still more for His Father's name Jesus replied: "I am. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

The Son of man, who is also the Son of God, shall come to judge the world, and then shall these very men who are now about to condemn Him to death be brought before Him for condemnation.

Jesus Is Condemned

"Then the high priest, rending his garments, said: What need we any further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; what think you? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death." Thus by a formal act of the great council of His chosen people the God of Israel was finally and forever rejected.

As Our Lord stood there before them He thought of all that He had done for them in their long history of two thousand years; how He had brought them out of the land of Egypt in signs and wonders; how patiently He had borne with their idolatries; how often He had warned and threatened them; how mercifully He had chastized and forgiven them. He thought of his own preaching through their cities and villages, of the miracles He had wrought to convert them and induce them to accept Him as their promised Redeemer. All has been in vain. They have cast Him off. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (John 1:11) And this great crime, like every other throughout the passion, was to

Christ a typical one, a sample of what was to be repeated again and again. Individual men and whole nations, too, would renounce their allegiance to Him, revolt against His Church and break away into heresy and schism. Oh, let me once more vow fealty to my Saviour and by my devotion atone for the disloyalty He meets with on every side.

* * *

God is faithful: by whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. - *1 Corinthian 1:9*

* * *

May the God of peace Himself sanctify you in all things; that your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. - *1 Thessalonians 5:23,24*

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Jesus is Mocked and Blindfolded. He is Left All Night in the Hands of His Guards

The Council broke up, everyone going to his home, while Jesus was left to be the sport of the servants. "Then did they spit in His face and buffet Him. And others struck His face with the palms of their hands." Jesus was silent under these gross insults.

As for me, I can not bear the smallest insult. A blow in the face would make me furious; but to be spat upon! Oh, I could not tolerate that! Yet see how patiently Christ endures it all. "They blindfolded Him and smote Him on the face, saying: Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck Thee?"

This is all we know of the events of that night. What a night it must have been for Jesus, all alone among these savages! The unrecorded sufferings of our Saviour should teach us the priceless value of those sorrows which, borne in silence and hidden from men, are known only to God.

Saint John now goes to visit our blessed Lady and to tell her all that has taken place. So while Jesus spends a sleepless night in the hands of His torturers Mary is watching and weeping in sympathy with her Son. It would be a hard heart that did not feel for them.

Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have brought up children, and exalted them: but they have despised me.

The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known Me, and My people hath not understood.

Woe to the sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, ungracious children: they have forsaken the Lord, they have blasphemed the Holy One of Israel, they are gone away backwards. - *Isaiah 1:2-4*

* * *

My heart hath expected reproach and misery. And I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort Me, and I found none. - *Psalms 68:21*

* * *

Christ Before Pilate

The sun had already risen, and was spreading its beneficent rays far and wide over the plains of Judea, when, the sentence of death having been definitively pronounced, Jesus was again loaded with chains and dragged to the palace of Pontius Pilate.

Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea, to whom alone belonged the power, not only to execute the sentence of death, but also to judge whether those brought before his tribunal were deserving of such sentence.

Arriving at the gate of Pilate's palace, the chief priests and ancients halted, because this being the place where criminals were condemned, these hypocrites feared that by entering they should contaminate themselves and become irregular and unclean and consequently unfit to offer sacrifice or participate in the solemnities of the approaching feast of the Pasch. So they delivered Jesus to the guards with orders to bring Him before Pilate and to request that official, in their name and that of the Jewish people, to deign to expedite the trial by ratifying at once the sentence of death already pronounced. They added that the affair was one of urgent importance, and for this reason they themselves had come to the palace, though, acting in compliance with their own law, they dared not enter its portals.

Our Lord's accusers, being scrupulous observers of the law, "went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled"; yet they are quite ready to shed innocent blood. Have I never been a whited sepulchre, never strained out a gnat and swallowed a camel? When Pilate asks: "What accusation bring you against this man?" they show no hesitation in altering the charge, so as to influence the governor's mind against Him. Christ had been condemned because He declared Himself the Son of God. The charges they now allege are totally different: "We have found this man

perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar and saying that he is Christ the King."

These charges we know were utterly false. Our Lord had not perverted the people. As to the tribute, He had said: "Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." He had hidden Himself when the people would have made Him king. But their object now is to represent Him as a rebel against the authority of their hated conquerors, the Romans.

"Answer Thou nothing? said Pilate. Behold in how many things they accuse Thee. But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate wondered." He had not come to defend Himself; He had only come to die.

Hail, King of the Jews

The governor then examined Our Lord privately. "Art Thou the King of the Jews? he asked. Jesus answered: Thou say (truly) that I am a king. But My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now My kingdom is not from hence."

The Gospel narrative goes on as follows:

"When He was accused by the chief priests and ancients, He answered nothing.

"Then Pilate saith to Him: Dost not Thou hear how great testimonies they allege against Thee?

"And He answered him to never a word, so that the governor wondered exceedingly.

"Now upon the solemn day the governor was accustomed to release to the people one prisoner, whom they would.

"And he had then a notorious prisoner that was called Barabbas.

"They therefore being gathered together, Pilate said: Whom will you that I release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ?

"For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him.

"And as he was sitting in the place of judgment, his wife sent to him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.

"But the chief priests and ancients persuaded the people that they should ask Barabbas and make Jesus away.

"And the governor answering, said to them: Whether will you of the two to be released unto you? But they said: Barabbas.

"Pilate saith to them: What shall I do then with Jesus that is called Christ? They say all: Let Him be crucified.

"The governor said to them: Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying: Let Him be crucified.

"And Pilate seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, taking water washed his hands before the people, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just man. Look you to it.

"And the whole people answering, said: His blood be upon us and upon our children.

"Then he released to them Barabbas: and having scourged Jesus, delivered Him unto them to be crucified.

"Then the soldiers of the governor, taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together unto Him the whole band.

"And stripping Him, they put a scarlet cloak about Him.

"And plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews.

"And spitting upon Him, they took the reed and struck His head.

"And after they had mocked Him, they took off the cloak from Him and put on Him His own garments and led Him away to crucify Him." - *Matthew 27:12-31*

* * *

Crucify Him

The sin-soaked earth is thirsting for the blood of a Redeemer.

Crucify Him because Cain hated Abel, because of the wickedness that brought about the Flood, because of the nameless abomination of the cities of the plain, because of the idolatries, and harlotries of the chosen people. Crucify Him because of the pride of the pharisee, the hollow-heartedness of the scribe, the filthiness of Herod's court, the cowardly injustice of Pilate. Crucify Him for the sins of Christian nations, for the sins of my own people, for my sins, O God, for my sins!

Pilate gave orders that Jesus should be scourged. That was the usual preliminary to crucifixion; yet Pilate still hoped that it might satisfy the people. "I will scourge Him," he had said, "and let Him go." How often have I said the same! How often have I flattered myself that I could gratify some sinful

inclination to a certain point, and then stop! But one sin has led to another, till, like Pilate, I have first scourged my Saviour and then crucified Him.

* * *

And the Eternal Wisdom is treated as a fool. Shall I not bear a little shame, then, for His sake? If any man among you seem to be wise in this world let him become as a fool, that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" - *1 Corinthians 3:18*

* * *

Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof: but he that doth the will of God, abides for ever. - *1 John 2:15-17*

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The Dreadful Torment at the Pillar

The passion of Jesus Christ was most bitter in all its stages, but the excess of that bitterness can be realized only by those who meditate profoundly on its particular incidents, among which there are few more touching than that of the scourging at the pillar. Nevertheless, the Evangelists pass over in silence all the impious circumstances connected with it, and the barbarity of the manner of its execution, and

content themselves with saying that Pilate, seeing that he could not convince the Jews of Jesus' innocence, caused Him to be scourged, hoping that this cruel spectacle might, perhaps, move them to compassion. "Then therefore Pilate took Jesus, and scourged Him."

The Evangelists also relate the crowning of our Saviour with thorns, and the crucifixion, two most painful events in the passion, with the same simplicity and conciseness, leaving it to the piety of the Christian to realize the atrocity of the Saviour's sufferings.

There was an atrium, or court-yard, at the entrance of Pilate's tribunal, and in this court-yard stood a marble column, rising only a few spans above the ground. A criminal condemned to be scourged was bound to this column by means of ropes passed around the lower portion of the body, his hands were tied behind his back, and more than half his person was exposed to the lash.

Scourging was an infamous torture inflicted only on slaves condemned to capital punishment, and was considered so atrocious that the Jews, a civilized people, or at least a people less barbarous than their contemporaries, in the infliction of this punishment were limited by law to thirty-nine lashes. Among the Romans, a cruel and sanguinary people, there was no limit assigned, but the number of lashes to be inflicted was regulated by the cruelty or humanity of the judge, and sometimes the matter was left entirely to the discretion of the executioner.

Jesus, therefore, having been condemned to be scourged, was dragged by the executioners to the court-yard of the tribunal, where a great crowd had assembled to witness the inhuman spectacle. Arrived on the ground, Jesus divested Himself of His robes, and then without any compulsion - as

was revealed to Saint Bridget - He presented His hands to the executioners, to have them tied, and offered Himself to be fastened to the pillar.

A certain number of men are told off to scourge Him in relays. We see them throwing off their tunics, turning up their sleeves and each choosing out his whip or bundle of rods, as if they were making ready for a game. It is mere sport to them, and they laugh and jest as they make their preparations.

Now they fall to. The rods come first, stripping the skin away; then the whips, loaded with lead or iron, till every part of that sacred body is crushed and mangled and the very bones laid bare, each well-aimed blow being applauded by the savage bystanders. At length they are all weary and the torture ceases; the rope is cut, and Jesus falls senseless to the ground. Then maybe they throw cold water on His face to bring Him to. He rises painfully, trembling in every limb, and is left to put on His garments as best He may.

This fearful torment was the penalty for my sins of impurity. Every sensual action, every carnal desire was present to my dear Lord as He groaned under those merciless scourges. Can I ever dare to commit such sins again? Do I not grieve over them now? Am I not eager to take vengeance on this flesh, which through its selfish greed for pleasure has brought such cruel suffering on my Redeemer?

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With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issues out from it. - *Proverb 4:23*

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He that loveth cleanness of heart, for the grace of his lips,
shall have the king for his friend. - *Proverb 22:11*

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Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God. -
Matthew 5:8

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And we know that to them that love God, all things work
together unto good, to such as, according to His purpose,
are called to be saints. - *Romans 8:28*

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Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in
incorruption. Amen. - *Ephesians 6:24*

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The Crowning With Thorns

Quivering from that cruel scourging, Our Saviour sits
crouched up on a stool set against the wall. The soldiers say:
"He calls Himself a king, does He? Then we will give Him
kingly honors." We are told that the whole cohort was
gathered together for this sport. Now the full tale of a Roman
cohort was 600 men; and, though some of this force may
have been on duty in other parts of the city, we may be sure
Pilate kept a strong body of soldiers about his person during
the anxious days of the festival. A hundred men, then, at the
least must have spat in Our Lord's face that day, after they
had placed upon His head the cruel crown of thorns.

We see them falling in, two and two, in mock procession,
laughing and jesting noisily the while, each couple in turn

bending the knee before Him, striking His head with the reed and hawking up all the filth in their lungs to spit it in His blessed face. What a sight He must have been when that sport was over! Great God in heaven! this is Thy beloved Son in whom Thou art well pleased; how then canst Thou look down upon this scene and not destroy the world which thus ill-treats Him?

This is the atonement my Saviour offers for my pride. I hold my head so high; I stand so much on my dignity; I am so impatient under the smallest slight or insult; so my Lord must be humbled to the dust, mocked, and flouted, and spat upon. Oh, surely I will begin now to wage war upon this accursed pride of mine, to humble myself, and to welcome humiliation for love of my despised Redeemer.

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Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words; for from it all perdition took its beginning. - *Job 4:14*

* * *

The Way of the Cross

"After they had mocked Him, they took off the cloak from Him, and put on Him His own garments, and led Him away to crucify Him" (Matthew 27:31)

"And bearing His own cross He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha.

"Where they crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst.

"And Pilate wrote a title also: and he put it upon the cross. And the writing was: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

"This title therefore many of the Jews did read: because the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city. And it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin.

"Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate: Write not: The King of the Jews. But that he said: I am the King of the Jews.

"Pilate answered: What I have written, I have written." - *John 19:17-22*

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A man condemned to crucifixion was made to bear his cross to the place of execution, that is, the transverse beam of it; for the upright post was either erected beforehand or carried thither on a cart. This crossbeam was a stout piece of timber some eight feet long, a heavy load for one so exhausted as Our Lord was. He receives it in gladness of heart; for has He not been looking forward to it all His life long? The thought of it in the garden filled Him with terror; but "love is strong as death." (Canticle 8:6) "Perfect charity casts out fear." (I John 4:18) The two thieves are also loaded with their crosses and the procession sets forth. A cart leads the way carrying the ladders and the three long beams; then come the executioners with ropes and heavy hammers and huge nails, which are to be driven with those hammers into human flesh, and last of all the three victims. But Jesus has gone but a few paces when He stumbles and falls. The wood is lifted from His shoulder, and He is raised and set on His feet.

The Meeting of Jesus and Mary

At this moment He sees His blessed Mother trying to approach Him. Their eyes just meet and then she is pushed rudely aside and the soldiers hurry Him along.

Poor broken-hearted Mother! Years ago it had been a rapturous happiness to look forward to His birth; but it was a deeper joy still to see Him lying on her breast, to press her lips to His. So now, though it has been agony untold to look forward to His passion, it is far more terrible than she ever thought it would be. Many a time has she tried to picture this scene to herself; but she never imagined her Jesus would look like this, torn, crushed, and beaten almost out of recognition even by her, His own Mother. Thus is the anguish of a lifetime's fearful anticipation concentrated in a single look.

Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry His Cross

It is now quite evident that unless He is dealt with more gently, Our Saviour will die upon the way, and that is not at all the intention of His enemies. Just at this moment Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, meets the crowd surging out of the city, and, catching sight of his beloved Master - for everything tends to show that he was a disciple - is moved, like the Good Samaritan, with compassion. The high priests mark his sympathy for their victim and that is enough for them. "Make this man help Him," they cry. So Simon is forced to carry the cross "after Jesus;" that is to say, they carry it between them. Our Lady sees what is done and blesses Simon from her heart. Who would not wish to share in Mary's blessing? Who would not gladly help Jesus to carry His cross?

Unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him. - *Philippians 1:29*

* * *

In all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are straitened, but are not destitute;

We suffer persecution, but are not forsaken; we are cast down, but we perish not;

Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies. - *II Corinthians 4:8-10*

* * *

And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. - *II Timothy 3:12*

Veronica Wipes Our Lord's Face

Women throughout the Passion come to the front, showing without fear their sympathy for Our Saviour. Tradition has preserved a touching incident that now befell. A lady of Jerusalem, named Veronica, seeing Our Lord's exhaustion and His face covered with filth and blood, comes forward to offer Him a handkerchief. Jesus accepts it and, having wiped His face, returns it to her with the impress of His sacred countenance upon it. Our Lady sees this also, and how she blesses the loving devotion of Veronica! She blesses every one who does anything for Jesus. Shortly after this Our Lord falls again. At length Our Saviour arrives at the foot of Calvary where He falls a third time; but they drag Him up the slope - a short ascent, yet how painful? I have often toiled up a much higher hill than this in the hope of seeing a fine view from its summit; but the only prospect before Jesus Christ is the nailing of His hands and feet and the three hours' agony.

At last the top is reached, and the executioners fall to work at once; for there is no time to lose. All must be over by sundown, the bodies must be taken away and buried, and the divine victim is eager too; "What thou dost, do quickly."

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Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to his works. - *Apocalypse 12:12*

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Now all chastisement for the present indeed seems not to bring with it joy, but sorrow: but afterwards it will yield, to them that are exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice. - *Hebrews 21:11*

Jesus Nailed To The Cross

While the two beams of the cross are being fastened together Our Saviour is offered wine mingled with gall or myrrh, "which when He had tasted He would not drink"; for the effect would have been to stupefy as well as to strengthen Him.

After this He is stripped of His clothes, which have now become glued to His wounds, so that the pain is very great, and no attempt is made to lessen it. Then lying down on the cross He stretches forth His hands to be nailed. The crowd presses round, those behind craning their necks to see over the shoulders of those in front. The thieves attract less attention; for they are but common criminals, and they are only to be bound to their gibbets, whereas Christ is to be nailed, and the cruel sport is always the popular one.

A huge nail is now placed on the palm of the right hand and with one swinging blow is driven through it into the wood; then stroke follows stroke, sending it well home. Then the left hand and then the feet are fastened in like manner.

(The above is the traditional conception of Our Lord's crucifixion. The ordinary process, however, was first to nail

the hands on the crossbeam and then to haul the body up with ropes till it rested on a crutch or saddle fixed on the upright post. The crossbeam was then fastened in position and the feet were drawn together and nailed.)

Mary at The Foot of the Cross

The blessed Mother is standing at the foot of the little hill, unable to get nearer by reason of the crowd. She does not hear the first blow; but the second, third, and fourth she hears as they drive the nails home into the hard wood, carrying the skin and flesh of her Son with them. Ah, think what each stroke of the hammer meant to her! Now amid shouts of delight and derision the cross is raised, her beloved impaled upon it. She watches - poor Mother - as its foot is dragged along the rough ground and then dropped suddenly into the deep hole dug for it, and anon comes the driving in of stakes to steady it, every jolt and blow causing new agony to the patient Victim.

* * *

Now the centurion and his men force the crowd back, and slowly, with the help of John and Magdalen, she moves up through that dense throng to take her appointed place beneath the gibbet of her Son.

O most afflicted Mother! to what shall I compare thee, or to what shall I liken thee, O Daughter of Jerusalem, in order to form even a faint idea of thy immense grief? Alas! only the depths of the sea can give me any conception of the depths of thy grief!

The Evangelists relate that, immediately after the crucifixion, four of the soldiers who had taken an active part in the execution of the unjust sentence gathered together the garments of Jesus, and dividing them into four parts,

took each a part. But for the seamless tunic which His Mother had made they cast lots, not wishing to spoil it by dividing it.

While this division was being made the people passed and repassed under the cross, insulting Jesus, wagging their heads in mockery, and vomiting forth against Him the most horrible blasphemies. This was not done by the rabble alone, but also by the chief priests, the scribes and Pharisees. All these things had been foretold by the prophet, who, speaking in the person of the suffering Saviour, said: "All they that saw Me have laughed Me to scorn: they have spoken with the lips, and wagged the head. And I am become a reproach to them: they saw Me, and they shook their heads." (Psalms 21:8; 108:25) Some cried out to Him, "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe in Thee." Others said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Vah, Thou that destroys the temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it: save Thy own self." Others again said, with bitter irony, "He hoped in the Lord, let the Lord deliver Him: let Him save Him, seeing He delights in Him. For if He be the true Son of God, He will defend Him, and will deliver Him from the hands of His enemies."

But what does Jesus answer to all these insults and blasphemies? Raising His languid eyes towards heaven, He prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

* * *

And they shall say to Him: What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands? And He shall say: With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me. - *Zachariah 14:6*

* * *

They have pierced My hands and My feet; they have numbered all my bones. - *Psalm 21:17,18*

The Title of the Cross

Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it upon the cross: and the writing was: *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.*

Jesus - This holy name means Saviour. It was decreed for Him before His birth: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins," (Matthew 1:21) It was solemnly given to Him at His circumcision, when His precious blood was first shed. Now He is pouring forth that blood to the last drop; the work of Redemption will soon be complete. It is a glorious name. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." (Philippian 2:8)

Of Nazareth - This reminds us of the life of humble toil now ending in such a cruel and shameful death. He has been poor and in labors from His youth. He has lived only to do the will of His Father, and He does it to the end.

King - 1. By inheritance, as the Son of His eternal Father: "I am appointed king by Him over Sion, His holy mountain." (Psalm 2:6)

2. By nature, having all the qualities of a king - wisdom, justice, power, mercy, a royal mind and heart. He is every

inch a king.

3. By conquest - "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most mighty. With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty, set out, proceed prosperously, and reign." (Psalm 44:4,5) "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit Thou at My right hand till I make Thy enemies Thy footstool." (Psalm 109,1)

Of the Jews - I he very tittle the Magi had given Him at His birth: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" But the Jews would not have Him. "We will not have this man to reign over us." (Luke 19:14) "He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name." (John 1:11,12)

Our Lord's Kingdom Is Not Of This World

Our Lord's kingdom is "not of this world"; yet He is to reign over the hearts of men to the end of time, and so the inscription "was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin," to show forth His universal dominion over the souls His blood has redeemed.

And I have sworn fealty to Him, again and again, declaring Him my king and my God. If I have proved unfaithful and disloyal, let me now return to my allegiance, and serve Him henceforth with all my heart, all my mind, and all my strength.

What I Have Written I Have Written

"The chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate: Write not the King of the Jews, but that He said I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered: What I have written I have written."

Here Pilate shows a firmness we should not have expected of him. He has yielded on every other point; he will not yield on this; but his firmness is not his own. It is the Holy Spirit that forbids him to make any changes. These words are to remain forever in condemnation of the Jews and of all who, like them, refuse to acknowledge the King of Kings.

* * *

I will extol Thee, O God my King, and I will bless Thy name for ever: yea, for ever and ever. - *Psalm 144:1*

* * *

To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. - *1 Timothy 17*

* * *

Thy kingdom! - *Matthew 6:10*

The First Word from the Cross

Jesus said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

The Divine Master distinctly taught His disciples to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." And He has told us that we must forgive, not seven times only, but seventy times seven, that with what measure we mete it shall be measured to us again. It is a hard lesson for corrupt human nature to learn, so He makes it easier for us by His example - by His own beautiful forgiveness.

Forgive Them: For They Know Not What They Do

Oh, the marvel of it! Do they not know? The Roman soldiers, of course, know not; how can they?

But the Jewish people, their leaders above all, surely they can not be excused. In truth they know enough to make them terribly guilty; yet they know not as they might know, as they will know some day. And so He finds excuse even for them, pleads for them all, offering His blood in atonement for their sin, like the Good Shepherd that He is. "He hath borne the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12)

I also was included in that prayer; yet how could He find excuse for me? I am a Christian. I have received so many sacraments, such a wealth of grace. I know so much more than they who brought about His death. Yes, I know indeed, and yet I know not. When I stand before Him for judgment, then at last I shall understand what sin means. So my good Jesus pleads for me: "He knows not what he does."

And He would have me forgive even as He has forgiven me. Have I got this lesson into my heart? Shall I ever master it? Yet how dare I say the "Our Father" unless I forgive? Is it not to call down God's vengeance on myself?

* * *

Then came Peter unto Him, and said: "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?"

Jesus said to him: "I say not to thee till seven times; but till seventy times seven times." - *Matthew 18:21,22*

* * *

And when you shall stand to pray, forgive, if you have aught against any man; that your Father also who is in heaven, may forgive you your sins. But if you will not forgive, neither will your Father that is in heaven, forgive you your sins. -
Mark 11:25,26

* * *

Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. - *Luke 6:37*

The Second Word from The Cross

The dying Saviour said to the penitent thief: "Amen, I say to thee, this day shall thou be with Me in Paradise."

Everyone about the cross is blaspheming and reviling, and the two thieves from their crosses join in. Hardened ruffians they, dying impenitent deaths. What should they know about Jesus of Nazareth? All the world says He is an impostor, so of course it must be true. He calls Himself the Christ, the Son of God; a merry jest to be sure; so in the midst of their own agony they laugh at Him. "If Thou art Christ save Thyself and us."

But presently one of them catches that marvelous prayer of forgiveness. "Great God, instead of cursing His tormentors, as we do, He is asking pardon for them! Impossible, unless He is what He claims to be. Of a truth it must be the promised Messiah;" so the scoffer stops his ribaldry and listens. Again the same words. Then in quick succession, as faith enters his soul, he strives to silence his fellow, confesses his own guilt, and proclaims the innocence of Christ.

Grace has been offered and accepted, and now it comes back in full flood, bringing complete faith with it. This man dying beside him is his King, his God. One mass of wounds, as he sees Him, He is on the point of entering into His kingdom. Upon no earthly throne will He ever sit. His kingdom is not of this world but of heaven. "Lord, remember me when Thou come into Thy kingdom," he prays.

And Jesus said to him: Amen, I say to thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

This dying criminal is conscious of a long life of sin: he does not dream that he can enter at once into God's kingdom; all he craves is to be remembered in his place of exile. And Christ's reply grants much more than is asked; not only will He remember His fellow-sufferer, but in reward of his great faith and contrition bring him this very day into paradise. His cruel death in union with that of his Saviour shall be taken in full atonement for the shameful past.

On Calvary we learn that suffering is the law under which we all have to live, a law no child of Adam can hope to evade; for here we see three crucified together, the innocent, the hardened sinner, the humble penitent. Suffering, therefore, being unavoidable, we should try to get some good out of it, and when borne for Christ and with Christ how rich in blessings it is! With what giant strides we can tread the ways of holiness when we are nailed upon the cross with Christ!

* * *

With Christ I am nailed to the cross. - *Galatians 2:19*

* * *

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. - *Galatians 6:14*

The Third Word from The Cross

"When Jesus therefore had seen His Mother and the disciple standing whom He loved. He said to His Mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that He said to the disciple: Behold thy Mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own."

From the poor criminal steeped till this moment in iniquity
Our Saviour turns to His sinless Mother. She is standing now
close to Him and John, the beloved disciple of Our Lord, at
the other side.

"*Woman*," He says. Ah, what a beautiful name to those who believe in the Incarnation! What name can become her so well? It is her prophetic name, her official title: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." It is this name that gives her her right to be here, the second Eve by the side of the second Adam.

"Behold thy son! Behold thy Mother!"

John stands there for all of us; and what a gift is this last bequest of the Sacred Heart! We might have thought He had nothing further to give.

What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done to it?" (Isaiah 5:4)

Yet there is one gift left, and He knows well the value of it. It is the dearest treasure He possesses, dearer to Him than His own heart's blood. "*Behold thy Mother!* What she has been to Me, that she shall be to each one of you. Be you her

children, and she, the Mother of your God, shall be a mother to you."

And from that hour the disciple took her to his own. I, too, will take her to my own, loving her for her own sake and for His who died for" me. She gave Him to me. She became His Mother to redeem me from death and hell. The precious blood He shed for me once ran in her pure veins and gushed from her virgin heart. O Mother of my God made man, be thou my mother and I will always be thy loving and devoted child.

* * *

Salve Regina

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to Thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

* * *

Now the generation of Christ was in this wise. When His Mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost.

Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately.

But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of

David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost.

And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.

Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying:

Behold a Virgin shall be with child and bring forth a man: and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

And Joseph rising up from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took unto him his wife. - *Matthew 1:18,24*

The Fourth Word from The Cross

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: *Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani* - My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

From the moment of the crucifixion a preternatural gloom had begun to gather over the sky, growing deeper and deeper as the hours wore on, and chilling every heart with awe and foreboding. The crowd dispersed. Many went home striking their breasts, conscious now that a great crime had been committed. A few of Our Lord's most savage persecutors remained to see the end and to taunt Him even in the moment of death. The centurion and his soldiers were still on duty, and Our Lady, John, and the little band of devoted women were gathered about their dying Saviour, the silence being broken only by the sobs of Magdalen and her fellow mourners.

Meantime the Heart of Christ is breaking with unutterable sorrow. His bodily tortures have hitherto veiled the anguish of His soul; but it has gone on all the while as we saw it in Gethsemani. He no longer sweats blood, for His blood has free passage now by a thousand open wounds and is nearly exhausted; but the same heavy load of weariness and grief is weighing on His heart, the sins of men, their cruel ingratitude and indifference, the waste of His precious blood through the loss of countless souls for whom He has shed it so unstintingly. It was decreed that the chalice should not pass away and so He is drinking it to the dregs. His soul is sorrowful even unto death; He has gone down into utter darkness.

"My God, My God," He cries, "why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Psalm 21:2) To His heavenly Father He is always unspeakably dear; there can be no real separation between them; yet, in some way we cannot understand, for He always enjoyed the Beatific Vision, from His human soul the light of God's countenance is now hidden by a dense cloud of sadness. His cry comes out of the depths, and His Father seems not to hear.

Why should our dear Lord endure this terrible abandonment? That at my last hour God may not abandon me. The darkness of Christ's soul is the light of mine; His desolation is my eternal hope.

* * *

Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh, shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, that He will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat and passing will minister unto them. - *Luke 12:37*

* * *

Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of man. - *Luke 21:36*

* * *

For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord shall so come, as a thief in the night. . . .

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

For all you are the children of light, and children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do; but let us watch, and be sober. - *1 Thessalonians 5:2,4-6*

* * *

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering (for He is faithful that hath promised).

And let us consider one another, to provoke unto charity and to good works:

Not forsaking our assembly, as some are accustomed: but comforting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching. - *Hebrews 10:23-25*

* * *

The end of all is at hand. Be prudent, therefore, and watch in prayers. - *1 Peter 4:7*

The Fifth Word from The Cross

"Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst."

A soldier hearing Christ say: "I thirst," came up with a sponge filled with vinegar, the acid wine provided for the soldiers, which he had set upon a reed, that he might moisten the parched lips of our dying Saviour. This, we may well believe, was kindly meant. It was the only act of consideration shown to Our Lord by his executioners and was no doubt richly rewarded. But the Jews cried out: "Let be! let us see whether Elias will come to deliver Him."

They pretended that the cry: "Eli, Eli;" "My God, My God," was meant for "Elias." "This man," they said, "called Elias."

Nevertheless the soldier reached up the sponge and pressed it against Our Lord's mouth. "In My thirst," sang the Psalmist, "they gave me vinegar to drink." (Psalm 68:22)

Our Saviour's thirst must have been terrible indeed. Nothing had passed His lips since He left the supper chamber the evening before; for, though He had tasted the soothing potion offered to Him before His crucifixion, "He would not drink"; and now for more than twelve hours He has been suffering and bleeding continuously. "My strength is dried up like a potsherd and my tongue hath cleaved to my jaws and Thou hast brought me down into the dust of death." (Psalm 21:16)

Fearful as was Our Lord's bodily thirst, that of His soul was far harder to bear. As the hart pants after the water brooks, so did He long for the love of men; yet how often was this to be denied Him! How many would give Him the vinegar of ingratitude instead of the hearty loyalty He had earned so well! How have I treated Him? What do I mean to do henceforth?

* * *

You that love the Lord, hate evil. - *Psalm 96:10*

* * *

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?

In all these things we overcome, because of Him that hath loved us. - *Roman 8:35,37*

* * *

The Lord keeps all them that love Him. - *Psalm 94:20*

The Sixth Word from The Cross

"Jesus, therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said: It is finished."

Our Saviour had asked in one of His parables: "Which of you having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it?" (Luke 14:28) Christ our Lord has reckoned the charges. It was a costly work He undertook; but He has not shrunk from the outlay. He has finished it and paid for it with the last drop of His heart's blood; and now He can say with truth: I have finished the work which Thou gave Me to do."

Divine Love can do no more. One drop of this blood would have been too great a price for the whole world, and He has spent it all; "for with Him there is plentiful redemption." All the prophecies and types are fulfilled. The Paschal Lamb has been sacrificed. The Son of man has been lifted up, as the

serpent was in the desert, for the healing of the nations. He has been "wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins." They have pierced His hands and feet; they have numbered all His bones. *It is finished.*

The Precious Blood

Many daring things have been said of the glorious price of our salvation - the precious blood of Jesus Christ, but none in which the faint heart, sick of the world, of sin, and of self, can find more comfort than in the bold security with which the great Saint Ignatius declares in his Spiritual Exercises: "When you present at the divine judgment seat this price of your ransom, the precious blood, you are, therefore, paying more than you really owe." Who among us has not at times been terrified at the thought of the great unknown eternity? Who has not dreaded the solemn hour which will usher us into the presence of Him whom we love, oh! so tenderly, but whom we also fear so deeply, since in His hands are the issues of life and death. Then, like the calm that fell on the troubled waters at the sound of His "Peace, be still," so over our affrighted souls flow the waves of the precious blood, its crimson streams effacing the handwriting on the wall which so haunts us, and bearing us in safety to the desired heaven. Let us dwell long and seriously on the words which have been reechoing through the centuries since the days of Saint Paul, "God who is rich in mercy." Our God, our very own, therefore His riches are ours, since "of His fulness we have all received." Why art thou sad, oh! my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me? From how many anxious hearts does not the plaint arise in words heard only in the sufferings and silence of the inner consciousness unfollowed by the sweet Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him who is the salvation of my countenance and my God!

Oh! how little we know the graces that are fast closing in around us because of this laver of healing which is flowing in such copious streams from those dear founts in the hands and feet and side of our blessed Saviour.

Let us press our lips to those sacred wounds of our own making, and be comforted in the meditations of the twilight hour, that in His own royal way He will make them our refuge. They will be our "hollow places in the wall," where we may hide ourselves, safe from the shadow of distrust. Let us ask our blessed Mother, who is the treasure house of the riches of His mercy, and delighted in our claim of being her children, to intercede for us. Her love for us, more tender than that of a mother, will be the unfailing solace of life's darkest hours, and while the darkness gathers we will fain believe that her dear eyes will shine brightly through the gloom, and happy tears will well up at the thought of her who is "our life, our sweetness and our hope."

An Offering

Eternal Father, we offer Thee the blood, the passion and the death of Jesus Christ, the sorrows of Mary most holy, and of Saint Joseph, in satisfaction for our sins, in aid of the holy souls in purgatory, for the needs of holy Mother Church, and for the conversion of sinners.

Ejaculations

Mary sorrowing, Mother of all Christians, pray for us.
Mary our hope, have pity on us.

* * *

God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God sent not His Son into the

world, to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him. - *John 3:16,17*

The Seventh Word from The Cross

"Jesus crying with a loud voice said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

The cloud of desolation has passed away. The heavenly Father is looking down with infinite love on that beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. In peace in the selfsame He shall sleep and He shall rest; for Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled Him in hope. (Psalm 4) "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49) are the first recorded words of our good Jesus, and these are the last: "My work is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Grant me, dear Lord, to be zealous for the glory of my God, that with my last breath I may be able to resign my soul into His keeping with the love and confidence of a good son going home to his father.

"And, bowing His head, He gave up the ghost."

Saint John Chrysostom points out that, if a dying man's head is propped up, first death takes place and then the head falls forward by its own weight, the spirit of life being no longer there to support it. With Our Saviour it is not so. He first bows His head and then gives up the ghost, to show that He dies of His own will. "I lay down My life," He tells us, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from Me; but I lay it down of Myself; and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again." (John 10:17) What return can I make for a love like this? "He hath loved me, and hath delivered Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20) "Greater love than

this no man hath that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

The death of Christ has taken all death's bitterness away; for "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." (John 3:14,15)

"God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world but that the world may be saved by Him." - *John 3:17*

Prayer

Divine Jesus, incarnate Son of God, Who for our salvation did vouchsafe to be born in a stable, to pass Thy life in poverty, trials, and misery, and to die amid the sufferings of the cross, I entreat Thee in the hour of my death, say to Thy divine Father: "Father, forgive him"; say to Thy beloved Mother: "Behold thy son"; say to my soul: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." My God, my God, forsake me not in that hour. "I thirst" truly, my God, my soul thirsts after Thee, Who art the fountain of living waters. My life passes like a shadow; yet a little while and all will be consummated. Wherefore, my adorable Saviour, from this moment, for all eternity, *"Into Thy hands I commend my spirit."* Lord Jesus, receive my soul. Amen.

The Piercing of Christ's Side

"When they saw that He was already dead they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water.

"And behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom, and the earth quaked and the rocks were rent. . . . Now the centurion and they that were with

him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: Indeed, this was the Son of God."

All Nature bears witness to its dead Lord, the pagan Romans confess Him, the people go home smiting their breasts, and yet their priests and elders are unmoved. They besought Pilate that the legs of the crucified might be broken and that their bodies might be taken away.

But it is written of Christ, under the type of the paschal lamb: "Neither shall you break a bone thereof." (Exodus 12:46) It is written again: "They shall look upon Me, whom they have pierced." (Zachariah 12:10) So one of the soldiers opened His side with a spear. Deep and wide was the wound the broad lance-head made; Saint Thomas later on could put his hand into it. That wound has laid open to us the burning Heart of Our Redeemer, that, entering in, we may know how much He has loved us and learn to love Him in return.

"And immediately there came out blood and water," the water, as the Fathers teach, being a symbol of Baptism, the blood of the mystery of the altar; and so the Church is brought forth from the side of Christ, now asleep in death, just as Eve from the side of the sleeping Adam.

Let us kneel down and adore the dead body of our God and Saviour, thanking Him from our hearts for all He has done for us. What He really looked like we hardly dare to think. If our crucifixes showed Him as He was we should turn sick and look another way. "We have thought Him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:4)

Yet we can take up a crucifix and examine it, discuss the pose of the limbs, the expression of the face, treat it, in fact, as a mere work of art and lay it down without a sigh!

Prayer Before a Crucifix

Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus, while before Thy face I humbly kneel, and with burning soul pray and beseech Thee to fix deep in my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope, and charity, true contrition for my sins and a firm purpose of amendment; and while I contemplate with great love and tender pity Thy five wounds, pondering over them within me, and calling to mind the words which David, Thy prophet, said of Thee, my Jesus: "They have pierced My hands and My feet: they have numbered all My bones."
(Psalm 21:17,18)

The Entombment

"Joseph of Arimathea besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave leave. He came therefore and took away the body of Jesus.

"And Nicodemus also came (he who at the first came to Jesus by night), bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

"They took therefore the body of Jesus and bound it in linen clothes, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

"Now there was in the place where He was crucified a garden: and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein no man yet had been laid.

"There, therefore, because of the parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus: because the sepulchre was nigh at hand." - *John 19:38-42*

With sympathy and love for the bereaved Mother of Jesus, stand by and watch the little band of disciples as they perform this last solemn office over their beloved Master. The wounds in His hands have become so enlarged by the great weight upon them, that the hands can be drawn over the nails, without any great effort; but the nails through His feet must be forced out. Oh, how deep they have gone into the wood! At last they are loosened and removed, and then gently and reverently they lower the body of Our Saviour to the ground and lay His head on His Mother's breast.

Now they wash those gaping wounds and, taking off the thorny crown-though many of the thorns are embedded so deep that they can not be drawn out-they cleanse the filth and blood from His sacred face and, laying His arms by His sides, they swathe Him in His winding-sheet. When He came on earth He was wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger; now He is to be laid in His tomb.

The holy Virgin has wept in silence till now; but now see how she sobs, poor broken-hearted Mother! She tries to take out those thorns fastened in His brow; but her tears blind her and she has to leave it to others. She is thinking of Him as He slept on her bosom at Bethlehem, as a boy at Nazareth, so beautiful, so lovable, so dear to God and to men. For more than thirty years she has foreseen the pitiful end of it all, and now it has come; her Jesus lies dead in her arms. O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like my sorrow." (Lamentations 1:12) And all this is my doing! My sins demanded this awful atonement! How can Mary ever forgive me? Yet Jesus, I know, has forgiven me and with His last breath bequeathed her to me as my own mother. So I mingle my tears of penitence with her tears of love, knowing that she will be a mother to me.

And now they lift up the sacred body of the Saviour and carry it to the sepulchre hewn out of the rock. There they lay it down for the angels to take charge of till the hour of its glorious resurrection. They close the entrance with a great stone and go their ways, never to forget this hour with all its heart-rending sorrow, never to forget the divine Friend, who, "having loved His own who were in the world, loved them unto the end." (John 13:1)

Mater Dolorosa

There is a group of statuary called the "Pieta," which reminds us of all the sorrow of the Blessed Virgin, not by representing them all, but by presenting to our view that scene in the sacrifice of Calvary wherein the dead body of the Saviour, after having been taken down from the cross, is laid in the arms of the Mother of Sorrows; that moment when Mary gave to Jesus the last sad look and the last loving embrace ere His sacred body was consigned to the tomb. When we behold the dead body of Christ pressed to the bosom of the Virgin Mother, when we behold Mary's searching, agonizing glance into the sightless eyes, and into the gaping wounds of Jesus, we need not be told what had been, up to this, the Son's sufferings or the Mother's sorrows. Just as the last kiss on the brow of a loved one cold in death brings, in an instant, before the mind, the incidents of his last sickness, even the whole life of the dead, so one look on this group recalls all the incidents of Our Lord's suffering and of Our Lady's sorrow, with the distinctness and vividness with which a flash of lightning reveals objects in the darkness.

That we may learn how hard it is to form any adequate idea of Mary's sorrow, the Church applies to her the words of the prophet Jeremias: "To what shall I compare thee, or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I

equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O Virgin Daughter of Sion? For, great as the sea is thy destruction." (Lamentations 2:13)

Let those who would form some idea of her compassion look at Mary, from the moment of the Incarnation, standing in spirit as truly under the shadow of the cross as when she actually stood by the cross of Jesus on Mount Calvary. During that more than thirty years of martyrdom, her knowledge of Jesus' sufferings did not increase, but her realization of them became more and more vivid and painful in proportion as she saw Jesus increase in age, in wisdom, and in grace, until she saw Him offered a bleeding, dying Victim on the tree. Every time she saw Jesus, every time she heard Him, every time she thought of Him, she was compelled in spirit to offer Him as a propitiation for the sins of the world.

The Shadow of The Cross

There is a painting which may be called "The Shadow of the Cross." It represents a scene in the workshop of Nazareth. Joseph is employed at the carpenter's bench, Mary sits plying the distaff. A bright summer's day pours a flood of light into the room. Jesus, a beautiful youth, with filial piety informing every feature, advances with outstretched arms toward His Mother to embrace her, and to imprint a kiss upon her cheek. Oh, what would this scene have been to Mary, with what joy would it have dilated her soul, if only the future had been concealed from her! But, alas! looking at Jesus, the Mother's joy is turned into grief, because she sees that the loving attitude of her Son casts the shadow of the cross on the opposite wall.

What more touching, entrancing, than the scene enacted at Bethlehem! The winter winds were joyful with the music of the multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and

singing "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will"; the dismal cave was lighted up with the glory of heaven; angels, and wondering, adoring shepherds came to worship the new-born Saviour; and Mary and Joseph lovingly, adoringly, contemplated the heavenly Babe. Had that scene, which has filled the earth for centuries with light and gladness, no joy for Mary? Did not its splendor, for the time being, dispel the shadow of the cross? Did not Mary, in the words of Holy Scripture, rejoice Because a man was born into the world, and, for the moment, turn the eye of her soul from the vision of Calvary?

The Vision of Calvary

Alas! no. The joyous light of the Nativity only projected the shadow of the cross more distinctly upon Bethlehem. The scene in the stable, it is true, touched Mary's soul, caused rivers of love to well out of her heart, but only that the thought of Calvary might instantly change them into an ocean of bitterness. As Mary laid the divine Infant in the manger, as she saw His little arms stretch out as if to embrace her, she thought of the time that same Jesus would be laid upon the cross and nailed to it, when His arms would be stretched out in cruelest torture, in infinite love, to embrace the whole human race. As she listened to the song of the angels, she thought of the blasphemies with which men would demand His death; as she looked on the reverent shepherds, she thought of the wild beasts that would cry for His blood; as she looked on the glory of heaven lighting the first opening of His eyes, she thought of the darkness that would fall upon their closing. As she saw earth and heaven rejoicing over His birth, she thought of how man and God would forsake Him at death, as she clasped Him to her bosom, she thought of the time when He would be laid at last, as you see Him in his group of statuary, all bleeding and bruised, wounded and lifeless, on her breast. Thus, even

at Bethlehem, Mary stood in the shadow of the cross; and there, amid all the joy of that scene, was compelled to consecrate the winsome Infant to the death of Calvary. . . .

Considering the intensity, bitterness, and duration of her sufferings in soul and body, the question arises: Could mortal have made greater sacrifices, or have suffered more in behalf of any cause, than Mary made and suffered by consenting to give her Son for the salvation of men? What did patriarch, or prophet, or apostle do for the salvation of men in comparison with what Mary suffered for it? If those who, at Christ's invitation, abandoned their nets and boats to follow Him, shall hereafter sit on thrones and judge the world, what must be Mary's place in the kingdom of God, since she, in obedience to the divine will (to appropriate the words of Saint Paul), "spared not her own Son, but delivered Him up for us all"?

Let the redeemed learn, then, what they owe to Mary. Let them think of her more than thirty years' martyrdom, in consequence of her maternal instincts leading her to desire that the chalice of suffering might pass from her divine Son, while her obedience to the divine counsels and her devotion to man's salvation, doing a holy violence to her love, forced her to say: "Let the will of the Father be done; let my Son suffer death to redeem His people from their sins!"

Let them look often and thoughtfully upon the scene on Mount Calvary! Let them meditate on Mary's holy heroism. Let them think of her as a mother wounded in her tenderest affections; as sorrowful unto death, yet tearless; unwavering in her purpose to fulfill the promise made to God through Gabriel; willing to drain the chalice of her affliction; calm, when it came to making the sacrifice required for the redemption of the world; resolved to witness the end, to see Jesus blot out the hand-writing against sinners with the most

precious blood He had drawn from the fountains of her heart; to stand by the cross until she heard: "*Consummatum est*," - "It is finished"; until she saw her Son become the Saviour of the world, and the children of wrath become the children of God; until Jesus' lifeless body enfolded to her breast left her, amid the shadows of Calvary, in a desolation so unutterable that earth has no name for its anguish.

Let Christians look upon Mary crowned by Jesus on Calvary, in the words of Isaias, "with the crown of tribulation," and then they will understand why Mary takes an interest in their spiritual welfare; why she jealously guards the affair of their salvation in life; why she bends all her energies at the hour of death, to protect souls from the assault of the demon. Then they will understand why that unfailing devotion to the cause of the world's redemption which Mary displayed from Nazareth to Calvary she now exhibits in behalf of each and every one of the redeemed: to the end that the precious blood of Jesus shall not have been shed for any soul in vain.

- from "*Sermons*" by Father D. I. McDermott, D.D.

* * *

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live also together with Christ. . . . So do you also reckon, that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. - *Romans 6:8,11*

For the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men;

Instructing us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world.

Looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works. - *Titus 2:11-14*

The Risen Lord and His Mother

The Gospels say nothing of this apparition; but common sense tells us that, as none was so dear to Our Lord as His holy Mother, none had been so faithful to Him, He could not fail to hasten *first* to gladden her with the joy of His resurrection. The Blessed Virgin knew that her Lord would rise again; her faith never wavered for a moment, and as He left Limbo for the sepulchre a deep peace came down upon her soul. When He raised His body to life she was conscious of it and her heart thrilled with deep and tender joy. She knew well that He would come first of all to visit her.

All at once her Jesus stands beside her. She clasps His feet and kisses them; then raising her from the ground He takes her in His arms, while she weeps for very gladness.

What a moment this for that blessed Mother! a foretaste of heavenly joy, making up for all she has gone through. "In the evening weeping shall have place, and in the morning gladness." (Psalm 29:6) "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul." (Psalm 93:19)

Let me take part in Mary's joy and thankfulness.

* * *

"My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." - *Luke 1:46-47*

Regina Coeli

O Queen of heaven, great joy to thee, Alleluia;
For Jesus Christ who deigned to be, Alleluia,
Thy child, is risen as He said, Alleluia.
Pray bless all for whom He bled, Alleluia.
V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, Alleluia;
R. For the Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia.

Let us pray

O God, who didst vouchsafe to give joy to the world through the resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, that through His Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Five Wounds of Christ

Our Lord has shown in His risen body that He means to retain His wounds forever.

Our Saviour retains His wounds for three reasons: *First*, as a memorial of His love and a pledge that He will never forget us. "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in My hands (Isaiah 49:15). So in Catholic countries the crucifix is seen everywhere, not only in churches and in the houses of the faithful, but in marketplaces and law-courts, on the high-roads and in the mountain-passes, that the memory of Christ's love for us may be kept forever green and the thought of His sufferings be ever with us. Only the heretic, the infidel, and the devil would destroy it.

I will pray that the Faith of old may thrive and blossom and Christ reign supreme.

Secondly, that He may plead with them to His heavenly father. To Noe God said: "I will set My bow in the clouds, and it shall be the sign of a covenant between Me, and between the earth: and when I shall cover the sky with clouds, My bow shall appear in the clouds; and I will remember My covenant with you and with every living soul that bears flesh, and there shall no more be waters of a flood, to destroy all flesh" (Genesis 9:13). Much more, then, is God moved to mercy when He looks on the wounds of His beloved Son. "Behold, O God, our protector, and look on the face of Thy Christ" (Psalm 133:10). "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just." (I John 2:1)

Thirdly, that these blessed wounds may stir our hearts to gratitude, loyalty, and atonement. "And they shall say to Him: What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands? And He shall say: With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me." (Zachariah 13:6) "Behold this Heart, said Our Lord to Saint Margaret Mary, "which has loved men so much and is so little loved in return." These sacred wounds at the last day will fill the just with hope and joy; but what terror they will bring to the wicked! "They shall look on Me whom they have pierced." (Zachariah 12:10)

About This Ebook

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